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## The Link between Coronavirus and Darwin according to Pervez Hoodbhoy: A Critical Response

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### Abstract

This paper provides a critical response to Pervez Hoodbhoy's article that first appeared in Dawn, Pakistan's leading newspaper in April 2020. Hoodbhoy, a well-known physicist in the country and a former associate of the Nobel laureate Abdus Salam, titled the article 'Corona - Our Debt to Darwin.' The article's main contention is that coronavirus reaffirms the truth of Darwin's theory of organic evolution by means of natural selection that emphasises random variation and survival of the fittest as its main tenets. Hoodbhoy fully embraces this theory leading him to adopt a confrontational ideological position against religion. He also contends that Darwin's natural selection is the key to unravelling the mysteries of coronavirus and to success in delivering the needed vaccines. This paper seeks to rebut both of Hoodbhoy's contentions through arguments drawn from several disciplines, especially history and philosophy of science, evolutionary biology, theology, and traditional medicine. It argues that the contentions are premised on two main assumptions that are weak and questionable. First, Darwinian natural selection has always been central to evolutionary biology. Second, biology has well established knowledge about viruses, particularly coronavirus. This paper shows that the two assumptions are not supported by contemporary knowledge in biology. It argues that Hoodbhoy's contentions are more motivated by his sectarian evolutionist ideology than by scientific considerations.

### Keywords

Author Keywords: Evolutionary theory; natural selection; coronavirus; tradition; rationalism

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